

# Citizen's Advisory Committee for Long Range Planning

## Annual Report

July 2006

### **Forward**

The Citizen's Advisory Committee for Long Range Planning (the Committee), comprised of residents from the seven election districts, two "At Large" members, a facilitator, and a staff appointment, submits its annual report for 2006 and wishes to thank the school system employees for their efforts and support throughout the reporting period. Individuals contributing to this report are:

Thomas Coen, Chair and George Washington District Representative

Denise Fruik SCPS Facilitator

Michele Leith, SCPS Staff

James McCrosky, Aquia District Representative

L. David Moyer, Vice Chair and Hartwood District Representative

Marli Roberson, At Large Representative

Dennise Sant, Garrisonville District Representative

Gene D. Smith, Griffis-Widewater Representative

Jeffrey P. Spinnanger, Falmouth District Representative

In recent years, the Committee has invested time and effort beyond its normal activities to visit schools and prepare reports of its observations for the School Board and SCPC's benefit. Some members wonder if these visits add value and request the Board and SCPC's feedback, which will contribute to the Committee's initial organization and planning meetings when it reconvenes in September 2006.

### **Methodology**

The Committee continued its policy of examining schools in county election districts. This year it chose the Hartwood District then proceeded to the Aquia District where members interviewed school officials about issues concerning facilities within those schools. They also met with parents at Hartwood Elementary.

This year, committee members visited Hartwood Elementary, Rocky Run Elementary, Winding Creek Elementary, Colonial Forge High, Brooke Point High, and Anne Moncure Elementary. The reports of these visits have been given to the facilities assessment engineer, and highlights of those visits are included in this report as:

Appendix A: Rocky Run Elementary School

Appendix B: Hartwood Elementary School

Appendix C: Winding Creek Elementary School

Appendix D: Colonial Forge High School

Appendix E: Brooke Point High School

Appendix F: Anne Moncure Elementary School

### **Status of Prior Year Report Recommendations**

The Committee would like to note that the following recommendations from prior annual reports were acted upon:

Access to Committee Information via the Internet: The Stafford County Public Schools (SCPS) added and staffed a “web manager” position to its SCPS personnel. This person puts committee members’ names, meeting dates, and meeting minutes on the SCPS website.

Construction of a High School in Stafford County’s Southeast Region: The SCPS system is currently looking to buy land in the southeast section of the county with the intention of building a future high school on the property.

Multistory Buildings: During the planning for the 2008 elementary and middle schools, floor plans for multistory facilities were seriously considered.

### **Recommendations**

#### **ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE:**

Part of Stafford County’s population growth in recent years includes a growing percentage of families where English is not the primary language. In their conversations with the administrators of the schools visited, Committee members discovered people of many different nationalities call Stafford County home. These include Russian and other Eastern European groups, as well as Asian and African ethnic groups. These groups, combined with the more prevalent Hispanic nationalities, constitute a growing need to offer instruction in English as a second language (ESL) in the schools. ESL student population varied at the different schools, but the consensus among

school administrators was that this group will keep growing thus emphasizing the need for a comprehensive plan to assimilate them into the schools.

The Committee recommends the school board commission a study to assess the impact a growing ESL student population will have on the county school system in order to devise a comprehensive strategy to deal with it effectively.

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP:

In its 2004 Annual Report, the Committee recommended that its membership include representatives from the SCPS Transportation Department and the Stafford County Planning Department. In fulfilling its charter, the Committee confronts strategic issues equally affecting the schools and the County itself such as student transportation and its impact on county planning for roads, the need for buses, etc.

Unfortunately, this recommendation has not been acted upon. A member from these groups would facilitate the Committee's capability to discuss, consider, and evaluate a wide array of issues requiring long range planning when reporting to the Stafford County School Board. The importance of county level participation in the Committee's discussions and actions is such that the Committee repeats the recommendation that membership in the Citizens Advisory Committee on Long Range Planning be expanded to include representatives from the SCPS Transportation Department and the Stafford County Planning Department.

#### COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC:

As the committee often deals with issues and topics of concern to the public and desires its input, mechanisms should be established to facilitate the public input. With the committee's meetings, agendas and minutes on the SCPS website, establishing a way for the community to contact the committee is in order.

The committee recommends that an email link directly to the committee be established through the school's website to enable the public to communicate with the committee and by which the committee can respond.

#### ACCESS TO THE COMMITTEE'S MEETINGS

Citizens Committee meetings are considered public meetings by nature; however, public participation has been extremely low due, in part, to difficulties for individuals to physically access them. Committee meetings are held in the Alvin Bandy Complex after normal working hours where entranceways are typically locked for the evening. Any member of the public wishing to attend this or another citizen committee meeting must stand outside the locked doors in hopes of being seen and let in by someone inside the building. Through communications with other citizen committees and in direct observation, it is clear this issue impacts other committees, too.

The committee recommends that a procedure be established at the Bandy Complex where meetings held after normal hours are accessible by the public. There are numerous possible solutions.

- One is that the Bandy complex have an attendant remain during committee meeting hours to facilitate public access and participation.
- Another may well be the keyless entry and security system being put into place at the Bandy Complex and discussed later in this report.

The committee notes that contingent upon successful security system pilot testing at the SCPS and ultimate incorporation of a standard system, having an attendant man the doors to the Bandy Complex during various committee meetings to allow public access will be an interim measure.

#### REDISTRICTING:

One of the Committee's facets is its involvement in all redistricting efforts. The committee chair or designee serves on all redistricting committees and has served on four of these committees.

Based upon that service, the Committee recommends the following actions:

- That the element of feeder schools be removed from policy 7-12. With the number of new schools being activated over the recent years, few students have remained in a situation where they attended the same elementary, middle, and high schools throughout their academic progression. The county's growth has been such that all schools have been impacted, so this criterion is not as relevant as the others in the policy.
- Redistricting efforts over the past two years have made it likely that there will be a period where no new redistricting is likely to occur. The committee recommends and supports the efforts being made by staff to create a database of all past moves along with reorganizing the Area Planning Units (APUs) to clarify the process and assist in future redistricting.

#### SCHOOL SITES/CONSTRUCTION

##### KEYLESS ENTRY SYSTEMS

The 2006 school visits revealed a series of commonly shared concerns, some of which are being addressed at the SCPS. The SCPS just recently began addressing a safety concern which, in the opinion of this committee, should be resolved with all deliberate speed: The installation of a standard keyless entry security system at every school.

The terrorist attacks and the sniper incident of recent memory have raised the matter of building security to a heightened level of awareness. Committee members learned that schools, either through their parent-teacher organizations or through their administration, contacted the SCPS to install keyless entry systems in their buildings; however the effort to establish common system requirements, identify a system configuration, and otherwise move to act on installing these locks has been uncoordinated. As a result, several schools bought and installed systems on their own, but these systems are not standardized as to equipment and installation. While the Committee acknowledges and praises the initiative and efforts these PTO's, school administrators, parents, and teachers took to meet this need, it also considers a standard system of equipment and installation throughout the county to be preferable for overall cost and operating reasons.

Since raising this issue, the Committee learned from direct conversations with the SCPS Director of Security and Risk Management that the school system is planning to evaluate a standardized security system using the Bandy Complex as a pilot test site. Furthermore, more comprehensive security systems including both keyless entry locks and surveillance cameras are now incorporated into standard drawings and designs for future school construction. Schools that have already bought and installed their own systems will not be required to replace them immediately.

The Committee recommends that the SCPS take immediate action to establish school wide requirements for a keyless entry system; that it determine a common system configuration; promulgate common policies and procedures governing the system's installation, operation, and maintenance; then commence an orderly and expeditious installation in every school in the county.

## **FACILITY ASSESSMENTS**

Through the Committee's school visits, two schools, Hartwood and Moncure Elementary, presented themselves as priority candidates for a facilities assessment of long term sustainability. The committee is aware of the attempts that the School Board and SCPS have made regarding these facilities.

The Committee recommends SCPS give special attention to these two schools.

## **Committee Plans for 2006 – 2007**

- Continue school visits throughout the county by resuming visits in the Aquia District, continuing on to the Rockhill and Griffis-Widewater Districts, and then compiling information gained from those inspections into written district reports for the School Board's use.
- Receive a build out analysis from Stafford County and assess its impact on the school system. For the past year and a half, the Committee has tried to obtain a build out analysis or other relevant information from the county to ascertain the impact of maximum land use and growth on the school system. For much of the time, the Committee has been stymied in its efforts by communications difficulties with the county's planning department and with data, which on its

surface, makes this task difficult. The SCPS staff members assisting the Committee have spent many hours on this as yet unresolved issue. Had a build out analysis been available, it could have naturally aided the school system's participation in the Comprehensive Growth Plan.

- Examine issues and concepts that could facilitate long range planning.
- Examine other issues as the School Board directs.

#### Appendix A: Rocky Run Elementary School

##### **Specific Observations:**

- Rocky Run is a relatively new structure and is in excellent condition overall. Two areas of concern do exist, however. First, moss appears to be growing on the school's south side. The second and more important issue is the presence of an exposed drainpipe in the rear of the building near the playground. Because of the pipe's proximity to the playground, children could get hurt while playing.
- Classrooms have standalone cabinets and shelving against the walls that take up quite a bit of space.
- Rocky Run's computer lab currently has thirty desktops and printers which is sufficient to allow each classroom approximately a half hour of computer daily. The school also has one hundred laptop computers that have increased computer availability and use.
- There is no keyless entry security system to restrict access to the building. All but the front doors lock automatically upon being shut, and the maintenance supervisor controls the key. To avoid being locked out during recess, teachers prop the back doors open creating a vulnerability to unauthorized access and wastes energy through lost heating and cooling.

#### Appendix B Hartwood Elementary School

##### **Specific Observations:**

- HES is over 40 years old. As a primary education facility, it is significantly outdated in contrast with many other SCPS elementary schools.
- The library is both outdated and significantly limited in its ability to support the student population and modern instruction.
- HES lacks sufficient instructional space to support various classes and activities such as art.
- HES lacks sufficient facility space to support faculty preparation, conferences, a teacher's lounge, and lunch needs thus directly impacting the work environment's quality and support in comparison to other schools.
- HES's infrastructure lacks potable water requiring daily deliveries for both drinking and cooking at significant annual operating, logistical, and manpower costs.

## Appendix C Winding Creek Elementary School

### **Specific Observations**

- To accommodate special education students, the school gave up one music room and the teacher's lounge.
- Hallways are too narrow to facilitate orderly and expeditious student traffic brought about by classroom changes, assemblies, etc. because of increased student populations.
- The building's interior requires frequent painting because of greater wear and tear brought about by higher student traffic.
- The school grounds need seeding.
- The school's main office is not large enough to accommodate the increased pedestrian traffic.
- Winding Creek does not have an electronic security system that will allow access by authorized personnel from various access points. If access is necessary from anywhere other than the front door, people must knock loudly on the door in hopes someone inside will hear them and let them in or go through the front door.
- The school officials use imagination to deal with space limitations. A hallway alcove was turned into a small reading room.
- The library is walled off from the main entrance offering students a quiet environment to read, check out books, etc. Pass through access is severely restricted to minimize disruptions.

## Appendix D Colonial Forge High School

### **Specific Observations:**

- Facility is in excellent condition
- Auditorium is small- can not handle entire school for assemblies
- Common planning areas for teachers are excellent- foster communications and collaboration as well as afford teachers space while others utilize their classrooms
- Shelving in the classrooms and cabinets are excellent addition. Shelving affords room for individualized instruction
- There is wasted space in this building design- under stairways, hallways
- Box office for the gym is not able to be used
- Lockers placed where pipes are in walls are not usable
- General layout of building- with two different entrances for students to arrive and depart each day can be problematic. Buses arrive on one end while students who drive arrive on the other

- Open ceiling in the Commons could have been used for classrooms or storage. Vaulted ceiling seems an underutilization of space
- Strong tie to the school by students and families

#### Appendix E Brooke Point High School

##### **Specific Observations**

- The school still has its original HVAC system. Boilers generate heat during winter, but the burners are constantly in need of repair. Because the manufacturer is no longer in business, getting replacement or repair parts is problematic.
- The EMS computer system that controls the air conditioning is inefficient and has crashed six times in ten years. The HVAC system is now being run manually.
- Brooke Point does not have a keyless entry system for secure access.
- There are approximately thirty-five leaks throughout the ceiling and many ceiling tiles have to be frequently replaced because of water damage.
- Television monitors in the classrooms are sometimes too small for the entire class to view lessons, etc.
- Many of the school walls have not been painted and need painting now.
- Current lockers are considered too narrow to hold student supplies, books, and heavy weather clothing.
- Brooke Point is expanding its facilities in the future and getting a new culinary arts program complete with new kitchen equipment.

#### Appendix F Anne Moncure Elementary School

- Assess MES for its suitability against SCPS standards for primary education facilities.
- SCPS should follow through with capital improvements of the MES HVAC system, especially replacing the Univent cooling system in the original building.
- SCPS should further install an additional entry to the Administrative Offices go provide the MES staff measurable benefits at relative low cost.
- Continue replacing old and worn classroom carpeting with tile.
- SCPS should conduct a survey of handicapped facilities, specifically the wheelchair lift, for operational and operating safety and for service standards adequacy.
- In light of the vulnerabilities associated with significant community encroachment, an assessment of the adequacy of school grounds surveillance equipment (cameras, video alarms), security equipment (locks, door alarms), security practices, and communications should be undertaken with the corrections and upgrades implemented before the 2006-07 school year.